# Crew Resource Management

Situational Awareness
Assertiveness
Decision Making
Communication
Leadership
Adaptability/Flexibility
Mission Analysis


# What Ju

*By Lt. Jeff Gaydash*

Everyone emphasizes the crew-coordination concept and how important a role it plays in multi-crew aircraft, such as the E-2C Hawkeye. As a mission commander, I always thought about this concept and tried to practice it each flight. But, I never had had to incorporate the crew-coordination concept into an immediate-emergency situation. Don't get me wrong, I've had my share of incidents, but most of them were deferred emergencies, like a trailing wire or unsafe-gear indications. None compared to the incident I just had witnessed.

We barely had landed on the boat after a single-cycle night hop, controlling air intercepts (AICs). We were near the end of cruise, and flight operations were slowing down. After Operation Iraqi Freedom, everything we did seemed uneventful, and our unit-level-training (ULT) flights just weren't cutting it. Two Hawkeyes were airborne, which was uncommon, considering our schedule the past couple of days. We still were trying to maintain that elusive night currency. We were the first Hawkeye marshal took and came in for an uneventful Case III approach and night trap.

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We taxied out of the landing area (LA) and headed for cat 2, right beside the foul line. This parking spot had been our normal one for cruise, although not a comfortable one because of its proximity to the LA. We taxied into our spot to be chocked and chained. That's when the whole night—the whole cruise, for that matter—changed.

As we waited for the chocks and chains, we heard a loud bang, accompanied by a heavy vibration in the aircraft. My first thought was we had thrown a turbine blade or had had a compressor stall. I looked at the starboard engine and saw nothing unusual. However, I did see a tow tractor and some lights beside the tail, which made me think something had hit us. I hadn't heard anything from the pilots; I hadn't thought about calling up front and asking what the situation was.

Imagine the aircraft vibrating, a loud noise coming from somewhere, it's night on the flight deck, and

# st Happened?

Photo by Christopher B. Stoltz. Modified.

you hear the pilots say, "Shut them down." To make matters worse, the entire CIC compartment went dark because the engines were shut down with the T-handles, which doesn't allow the emergency generator to come on. How high do you think my situational awareness (SA) was at that point?

Not being one to sit in a dark aircraft with low SA, I made the decision to get out. The funny thing was, my XO was sitting closest to the door as radar operator (RO) for this flight. I looked forward in the darkness and yelled, "XO, get out." How many times as a junior officer can you utter those words?

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All three NFOs started forward through the darkness into the forward-equipment compartment (FEC), toward the main-entrance-hatch (MEH) exit on the left side. Not knowing what was going on and unable to hear anything from the pilots, the XO cracked open the MEH, checked the left nacelle, and got out. We all followed and went aft of the aircraft, away from anything that might injure or kill us.

I saw the plane was not chocked and chained. People were running everywhere, and I looked around for the other Hawkeye that should have landed. What were all those people doing in the LA? I grabbed one of our maintenance personnel on the flight deck and found out the other Hawkeye already had been by. Its right wingtip had flown through our left propeller during a bolter. I could see our left propeller was torn, and the flight-deck personnel already were starting a combat FOD walkdown. Our crew helped out with the FOD search, then went to the ready room.

Looking back at the situation, I realized some of my mistakes. When I think about the propeller and what had happened, I realize our crew was extremely fortunate. My decision to get out through the MEH could have been fatal had the propeller still been turning and not held together. Getting out through the overhead hatch in the combat-information center (CIC) would have been the safer alternative, even at night.

The other lesson learned came from the lack of crew coordination from the front end to the back. The pilots knew what had happened, and they could have told us what was going on before cutting the engines. Good information flow would have influenced my decision as to which side of the plane to get out. In their defense, had I called over ICS and asked what had happened immediately after we heard the noise, I could have gotten the information I needed.

We also discussed if it was necessary to secure both engines. We could have left on the right engine to keep ICS and radios available. This decision not only would have helped us out as a crew, but we could have spoken to tower and told the boss our problem to help out the flight deck.

Good crew coordination definitely would have made this situation more manageable. As a Hawkeye NFO, I rely on the pilots to let me know what's going on around us on the flight deck, especially at night.

Two vital pieces of information didn't get passed. The problem was on the port side of the airplane and the plane was not chocked and chained. Knowing these facts before making any decision on abandoning the aircraft would have been a huge help. Whether it came from the pilots calling me or my asking, talking to each other was the missing key point.

The other E-2C eventually landed safely aboard after an airborne-controllability check. In the flight debrief, we agreed that talking things out would have made a confusing situation much clearer and safer for everyone.

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